

SERVICE UPDATE

<u>Name of Function:</u>	Development Management Strategic Place Planning
<u>Date:</u>	15 January 2026
<u>Title of Update:</u>	National Planning Improvement Framework – Progress Update Report
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Introduction

Members will recall that on 9 June 2025 a [service update](#) was published briefing members on Aberdeen City Council's National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF) [Assessment](#) and [Action Plan](#). The action plan forms the focus of improvement activity for the Council's planning service for the next couple of years and is closely monitored by the Scottish Government Improvement Service.

We have now moved into Year 2 (2025-26) of the NPIF. An [Update Report](#) has been agreed with the Improvement Service which documents the progress being made across the improvement actions, identifies further actions and plans for further collaboration with peer partners. It has been shared with ACC's Chief Executive, the Minister for Public Finance (with responsibility for planning within Scottish Government) and published on the Improvement Service website.

Aberdeen City Council's Strategic Place Planning service was in the later Cohort 3 of the trial year of the NPIF (Year 1). This meant the timeline between completing and agreeing the NPIF and being asked for a Year 2 progress update was only 3 months. This timeline, plus current absence and associated acting up arrangements at senior management level help explain why the majority of our improvement actions remain in progress. We are, however, comfortable that good progress is being made.

As well as continuing to progress the initial action plan, the following additional improvement actions have been identified as part of the Year 2 review:

1. Consider how use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as Microsoft Copilot can benefit the planning service and support staff efficiency.
2. Consider how day-to-day operations can better inform the external Customer Service Accreditation programme.
3. Consider how the next Local Development Plan for the city can help tackle the national housing emergency, as declared by the Scottish Government in 2024.

A similar approach to reporting on NPIF progress is planned for Year 3 (2026-27), and this will be reported to the Planning Development Management Committee by way of a Service Update in a year's time. The next comprehensive Full Assessment will take place in 2027-28 as shown on the diagram below

